

STATE OF NEBRASKA



Dave Heineman
Governor



STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Fire Marshal

News Release from the State Fire Marshal's Office

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Tips for Nebraskans on Power Outage Safety

Many Nebraskans have been impacted by the recent winter storms resulting in a loss of power to many areas of the state. A power outage of this magnitude can result in unnecessary loss of property, serious injury and possible death if citizens do not take proper safety precautions.

The State Fire Marshal's Office has received reports of five fires in the aftermath of power outages throughout central Nebraska, and one fire-related injury.

In conjunction with power suppliers, the Fire Marshal's Office encourages those Nebraskans experiencing a power outage to follow these safety tips to reduce the risk of fires, as well as burns and other injuries.

Only use a flashlight for emergency lighting. Candles, kerosene lamps, and propane lanterns create fire and burn hazards.

Turn off any electrical equipment in use when the power went out. When electricity comes back on, items that had been in use can create safety hazards and provide additional stress to an already fragile electrical supply.

- Individual electrical appliances should be turned off until power is reestablished.
- The MAIN disconnect in the service panel should be turned to the OFF position or pulled prior to power being reestablished.
- All other circuits should be turned OFF or disconnected through fuse removal at the panel.

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- Only a “single lighting circuit” should be energized upon reestablishment of power.
 - If any unusual brightness or dimness is observed when power comes back on, the MAIN switch should immediately be turned to the OFF position and the local power company notified.
 - If there is no unusual brightness or dimness, electrical loads should be slowly re-introduced.

Homes and businesses are being encouraged by power providers to conserve energy so residents are advised to turn on only essential appliances.

Generators should not be used inside a home or garage unless the equipment has been professionally installed and vented. If a generator is in use, appliances should be connected directly to generator outlets. Extension cords are not recommended, but if used, should be the proper size to safely meet the distance and load requirements for all appliances connected to the generator. This helps reduce the risk of fires. If you are not sure about proper sizing for extension cords, contact a licensed electrician.

A licensed electrician should be called to hookup generators in order to ensure that proper procedures for installation are followed, and reduce fire risks. Improperly connected generators create electrocution risks for utility line workers and others because of an unsafe back feed of electricity through normal distribution wiring.

Caution should be exercised when using fuel heaters in unventilated spaces. Only wood-burning stoves and fireplaces that have been inspected for proper installation should be used. Open ovens and gas ranges, along with propane heaters and charcoal grills intended for outdoor use are hazardous and should not be used indoors to heat homes.

Caution should be used in operating heating stoves that require forced air circulation. Without electricity, forced air circulation cannot be provided and an unsafe buildup of heat can occur. Devices requiring forced air should not be used unless power for the circulation can be provided. Using heat sources without ventilation to the outdoors can be a fire hazard and can also result in carbon monoxide poisoning.

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Monitor propane or natural gas equipment during use. Winter storms, especially those involving ice, can damage propane and natural gas equipment. If you smell or hear blowing gas, or if gas appliances cease to work or have abnormally high flames, contact your gas supplier immediately. Never store or place a propane cylinder indoors or in an enclosed area such as a garage or basement.

Make sure that smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are working. Check to insure that smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are properly installed and that backup batteries are in good working order.

Monitor local radio and television for latest updates and information.

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